

CLIL Case Study – Gladstone Park Secondary College

#nav_breadbrumbs

Curriculum > Languages Education > Approaches to Language Education > CLIL Case Study – Gladstone Park Secondary College

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This page provides extracts from the full case study in the report: [Research and Evaluation of the Content and Language Integrated \(CLIL\) Approach to Teaching and Learning Languages in Victorian Schools \(pdf - 12.63mb\)](#)

The report is also available in Word format: [Research and Evaluation of the Content and Language Integrated \(CLIL\) Approach to Teaching and Learning Languages in Victorian Schools \(docx - 38.16mb\)](#)

The focus of this page is on classroom practice and strategies.

Language - Italian

Subject - Year 9 History

Teaching approach - Since a trial of the CLIL approach in Year 8 Humanities in 2011, languages teachers at Gladstone Park Secondary College have offered CLIL to Year 7, 8 and 9 students across the Humanities, and in Mathematics.

The approach to teaching CLIL is based on principles and practices including:

- students being able to opt in to a CLIL program to avoid negativity and disengagement
- established routines to enable students to feel comfortable and confident in learning content through their additional language
- engaging the whole student and applying many of Gardner's (1983) Multiple Intelligences
- encouraging students to consolidate their learning by referring to dictionaries, working in pairs or small groups to support each other, and a 'buddy' system
- individualised attention
- after-school tutorials
- at Year 9, the importance of kinaesthetic activities, including games.

Strategies that work

Dramatisation

Drama is useful to not only present new material, but also for checking students' understanding without relying heavily on verbal representation. It also provides a collaborative opportunity for students to check, confirm, and clarify what they have understood by working with others. Dramatisation in the CLIL context does not emphasise performance, but the physical representation of meaning. In this Humanities unit, it meant having groups act out the narrative of an Aboriginal dreamtime story, but in Science it could be used to have students portray what happens to matter under different types of conditions, etc.

Routines (2)

Routines are helpful to establish a pattern of behaviour and expectations for the lesson, especially in moving from an English to an Italian language environment. However, they also provide safe patterns of interaction with which students become familiar. This enables them to focus on language and ideas, rather than worrying about the procedural aspects of the task itself.

In this program, lessons often began with a 3-minute warm up using a concept or sentence that students could recall from the previous lesson – each student contributed to expanding the main idea as the discussion went around. All students began standing up, only sitting down once they had contributed to the discussion. This provided motivation to participate, as did the advantage of contributing a response early since those students could offer something that had been rehearsed (i.e. before someone else said the same idea). This also provided a safe zone for students still at the level of memorisation/recall to participate, through to those capable of creating their own sentences.

At the end of the lesson, another variation involved having each student give one new word or sentence that they had learned before leaving the room.

See also:

Coatesville Primary School [Routines \(1\)](#)

Kew Primary School [Routines \(3\)](#)

Cognates

To support understanding by drawing on students' existing knowledge of language, teachers regularly use target language cognates. That is, words sharing common origins across both languages, for example, *attenzione* (Ital.) and *attention* (Eng.). This allows teachers to maintain and model communication that is authentic and still in the target language, without a direct reliance on English.

Extra-curricular tutorial system

The school runs a weekly extra-curricular class after school, using the Home Economics kitchens to make pizza and do follow up work in Italian. These were originally compulsory, but clashes with other extra-curricular activities made it difficult to maintain as a mandatory CLIL requirement. However, even as an optional drop in session, it still continues to be well attended and valued by students. It provides an opportunity to ask questions about class, as well as to socialise and build a class community in which students feel comfortable taking risks and making errors when using language.

High expectations and class culture

Teachers established clear guidelines and expectations of what they expected through taster classes (see *Language preparation course* below) and presentations at the start of the year about the CLIL program. This includes an expectation that once a key idea or phrase has been used in Italian several times, teachers will then ignore it if students continue to use it in English. If they are unsure, they should ask another student in the class how to say it in Italian. This builds clear and consistent expectations about when English is and is not acceptable, and the role everyone plays in class to support each other as a language learning community.

Language preparation course

This CLIL program commenced with an intensive two week language-only preparation phase, comprising 15 periods per week of Italian language study

(without any focus on content). The aim of this phase was to introduce students to basic social language, and skills for classroom interaction.

Visuals and drawings

Teachers often used visual aids to present new ideas and information, but students were also frequently encouraged to use drawings to show their level of understanding. This was useful not only to check students' initial comprehension of content (which could be underestimated due to the students' limited or incorrect use of language), but was also useful for extending students' understanding in higher order tasks to represent ideas beyond that available in their limited repertoire in the target language (without resorting to English).

See also:

Xavier College [Visuals](#)

St Monica's College, Epping [Visuals via ICT](#)

Three-stage lessons

Lessons were typically built around a three-stage structure: revise, new language and content, revise. The first phase focuses specifically on reactivating key background knowledge and language that teachers have identified during planning as essential for teaching the new material in the second phase. By devoting a specific portion of the lesson to revising what is already known, new content is easier to introduce since students have all been brought to 'the same page'. It avoids assumptions about what might or might not be remembered from previous lessons. The final revision stage is important for three reasons: first, to check students' understanding of the language and content objectives for the lesson; second, to reinforce the most essential elements of the lesson to students, even if they had not understood everything; third, to end the lesson by consolidating what students should be able to do, building confidence for future lessons.

Recognising the teacher-centred/student-centred learning continuum

Teachers have to feel comfortable working in teacher-centred classrooms. Many teachers feel uneasy with this approach as it is not common within mainstream education settings, but CLIL teachers spoke of the significance of their role in the classroom (especially during early stages of CLIL) when students depend on them, as the language role model, to provide the initial input into the teaching/learning experience.

In that sense, when framing 'teacher centredness' in the context of CLIL, it may be more helpful to think of the teacher as the one who takes responsibility for ensuring the message is understood. However, once understood, the responsibility then moves back to the student for learning, through tasks and experiences facilitated by the teacher to promote active engagement and the application of students' language, understanding, and skills.

Gardner's multiple intelligences

Using Gardner's (1983) multiple intelligences was helpful to ensure lessons did not only focus on students with strong verbal/linguistic learning styles or preferences, but engaged the full range of students in the class. Often, this could be accommodated quickly and efficiently through the lesson.

Note taking skills

Teachers identified the need to ensure students are taught specific learning-how-to-learn skills for coping in the CLIL classroom.

See also: Xavier College [Dictionaries](#)

In this unit, teachers focussed on developing students' note-taking skills, including annotating notes with images or keywords, and summarising and paraphrasing what they have understood.

Some points of caution

Tired techniques

CLIL teachers need to be prepared to evolve and change quickly. The class had been using a traffic light system to check understanding, where students indicated levels of comprehension by using red, green, or yellow cards left on their desk. This worked well for a while, but students stopped using it and it became unreliable. Although teachers encouraged students to keep using the cards, they recognised that it was ultimately no longer effective and have since replaced it with alternative strategies (e.g. revision quizzes). Teachers continue to revise and adapt strategies according to the students' changing needs and growing levels of understanding and communicative competence.

Challenges

Planning

Teachers recognise that CLIL planning takes substantial amounts of time and effort, with the primary tasks being:

- analysing the mainstream curriculum from a second language teaching and learning perspective
- mapping target language scope and sequence plans against curriculum content
- diagnosing and assessing students' language needs and profiles
- sourcing, translating, and creating specialist language teaching resources for curriculum content in the target language classroom, and
- collaborating with content-area colleagues from non-Language departments.

Advocacy

The Gladstone Park Secondary College program features strong support from the school executive and administration, but it also demands much from teachers in terms of having to build and maintain a number of wider, external relationships. This includes parental awareness and communication, and promoting the program to teachers and parents at primary feeder schools.

Middle years

Teachers commented on differences between CLIL classes at Year 7 and Year 9. Research has found that disengagement during the middle years is widespread, and certainly not confined to CLIL. However, teachers recognise that this problem can be exacerbated in CLIL settings if students are put in the position of not understanding what is happening around them.

However, it was also highlighted that CLIL presents a context that many students enjoy, presenting genuine opportunities for deep learning, challenge, and

engagement. The solution lies in ensuring the key message is understood, and then working in different ways to deepen understanding with a variety of tasks and different paces: 'just focus on a few points, and make sure that those few points are really done in-depth'. This is counter to what often happens in traditional secondary contexts where disengagement is high in the middle years; i.e. a focus on large amounts of content, rather than close study and in-depth engagement.